



LEE'S SUMMIT  
**R-7 SCHOOLS**  
*Learning for Life*

Reorganized School District No. 7  
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Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

December 1, 2014

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing today in response to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's recently announced proposal to raise the E-Rate funding cap by \$1.5 billion. The E-Rate program currently represents the only source of federal funding aimed at educational technology and is critical in providing discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access. As Executive Director of Technology in Lee's Summit R7 School District, I strongly support the infusion of the additional funding, and urge you to do the same.

The Lee's Summit R7 School District is a suburban district outside of Kansas City, Missouri. The R-7 School District serves the following cities in Jackson County, Missouri: Lee's Summit, Greenwood, Lake Lotawana, Lake Winnebago, areas of Raintree Lake, Lakewood and some outlying rural areas, with a small portion of the district extending into Cass County and Kansas City. Over the past few years our population of students living in poverty has grown significantly to 22%. In years past, the district has used eRate funding for telecommunications, internet access, and web hosting services. The federal changes made to the eRate program will significantly impact our ability to grow our internal infrastructure to support increased access for students. We are actively looking at a 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Without the infrastructure and continual access to internet connectivity this initiative would not be possible.

To raise the cap of the E-Rate program by \$1.5 billion, the Universal Service Fund fee will increase by 16 cents per month per account. 16 additional cents per month—less than half a penny per day—totals to an additional \$1.92 per year, approximately the cost of a cup of coffee. This proposal is both reasonable and justified, asking contributors to forgo one cup of coffee over the course of a year to ensure that our nation's schools and libraries are connected to the internet in a way that supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and prepares them for post-secondary opportunity.

No one questions that it is time to ensure that our libraries and schools are connected with the quality of connectivity that is sufficient and scalable for today's ever-growing connectivity needs. In less than twenty years since Congress established the program, E-Rate played a critical role in transforming levels of connectivity from less than one-quarter of schools and libraries to nearly all connected today. The E-Rate program's work is not done: Achieving the laudable broadband goals adopted by the Commission in July will require additional investment. The biggest obstacle the E-Rate program faces, even with the recent changes, remains the strain of increasing demand for E-Rate-supported services and persistently low funding.

The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rate's current and future success is to ensure that the program's funding is adequate to support, in a sustainable manner, the program's changes and goals as adopted in July. Chairman Wheeler's proposal does just that, representing a deliberate effort to expand educational opportunities for our nation's students. By focusing on high-capacity broadband connections to the internet (particularly those in rural communities) and providing sustained, additional funding to the E-Rate program, the modernized E-Rate will ensure the nation's schools—including mine—are able to keep pace with ever increasing connectivity needs.

The demographics in our school community continue to change. The rise in our students living in poverty affects their opportunity to have internet access at home. Although we have a plan in place to provide devices for our students to take home, we continue to see a need for affordable access for these families at home. It is important to provide students not only the device but also a way to afford connectivity at home. I would like to see the FCC also to consider two things: 1) Develop a Plan to allow a limited # of Cellular data plans for high need students within each district and 2) reinstatement/modification of basic telcom services rather than the phase out as planned (i.e.: 20% as opposed to 20 percentage point reduction - this would phase out services equally for all schools).

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program and its funding. I applaud Chairman Wheeler and the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by ensuring the future of this successful program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Gates".

Amy Gates, EdD  
Executive Director of Technology  
Lee's Summit R7 School District